This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 002227

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL, INR, AF/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2009
TAGS: KDEM NI PGOV PREL PINR
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: OBASANJO KEEPS FIRM GRIP ON PDP IN THE SOUTH

REF: A. LAGOS 2134
¶B. LAGOS 2138
¶C. ABUJA 2154 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne per 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary: The ruling PDP controls the governments in all the southern states except Lagos. As so often happens when a party obtains such dominance, most political friction in the south is no longer the child of inter-party competition. It is a product of the leviathan party's own internal dynamics and inconsistencies. Throughout the south President Obasanjo is attempting to throttle his internal opposition, many of whom are allied with Vice President Atiku. This has produced fissures in many state PDP organizations. Obasanjo will win many of these confrontations but, in the process, several PDP state chapters will be bruised and weakened. End Summary.

---
PDP: Control The South, Control The Party...And Perhaps The Country
---

¶2. (C) The Independent Nigeria Elections Commission (INEC) awarded the PDP all Southern States, except Lagos, in the 2003 elections; Elections universally criticized as stained by fraud. The PDP is demonstrably stronger in the South than the only other party that claims a nationwide base--the ANPP. Conversely, the ANPP is stronger in the North than the PDP.

¶3. (C) As conventional wisdom now stands in Nigeria, he who controls the PDP, should control the presidential and most others elections in 2007. Although constitutionally barred from the 2007 election for now, Obasanjo is working hard to make his imprint the one that dominates the party and the next electoral cycle. A key strategy toward achieving this objective is to squelch all known opposition within the PDP. The often clumsy, heavy-handed pursuit of this mission has spawned some successes but it has also generated greater discord underneath an already rancorous party tent. What follows are a few illustrative examples of Obasanjo's hard-line strategy against internal opposition within the PDP.

---
Things Fall Apart in Anambra
---

¶4. (C) Anambra State has become a hotbed of political intrigue. This is due in part to the intense struggle among competing local politicians and their allies in Abuja seeking to control both the State government and the party apparatus. At the center are Governor Chris Ngige and millionaire businessman Chris Uba, Ngige's former partner, now mortal enemy. Uba, is the brother of Presidential Special Assistant Andy Uba--a member of Obasanjo's inner circle. Due to this filial nexus, Chris Uba is seen as enjoying Obasanjo's support. Meanwhile Ngige is now aligned with VP Atiku. Uba has been trying to oust Ngige because Ngige reneged on a pre-election arrangement that would have ceded a considerable windfall from the state's coffers to Uba.

¶5. (C) While Uba has been stalking Ngige, the PDP national executive council, controlled by Atiku allies, expelled Uba from the party. In an apparent show of support for Uba, Obasanjo overturned the expulsion. Since then Uba has been unrelenting in his efforts to realize Ngige's downfall. Uba has gone to the extent of publicly claiming he helped Ngige rig the election, stealing it from All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate, Peter Obi. An APGA official has told us APGA has been holding close door talks with Uba in an attempt to arrange a deal that would give their candidate the gubernatorial chair. Uba has clearly suggested to APGA that his involvement in the talks and his ability to deliver was based on the support of his brother and of President Obasanjo.

¶6. (C) National Assembly elections in Anambra have also been a battleground between Obasanjo and Atiku allies. Prior to the 2003 elections, PDP's Executive Council forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) names of three senatorial candidates in Anambra state. The three candidates--Ben Obi, Joy Emordi, and Christian Ukchukwu, all Atiku confederates--won the elections in their respective

senatorial districts. However, the party executive wrote a letter asking INEC to replace the apparent victors with three other party members. INEC acceded to the party's request and the three men--Ikechukwu Abana, Emma Anosike, and a Ugochukwu Uba--were sworn in as senators. (Ugochukwu is Chris and Andy Uba's brother.) Although an election tribunal faulted the entire process and ordered the process reversed, neither INEC nor the PDP has complied. An unabashed braggart, Chris Uba has told many people that the President ordered the replacements. Obasanjo has denied any role in the replacements. Yet, the normally decisive Obasanjo has not exerted his authority to make INEC or the PDP comply with the court order to reinstate the original candidates. (Comment: If you were to ask many Anambrans, they would state the senatorial elections were twice stolen. First, APGA probably won two of the seats but INEC gave the victory to the PDP, only for one faction of the PDP to take the spoils from the other. This embarrassing episode is one of the reasons cited by world-renowned Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe in his October 18 refusal of Nigeria's second highest award, Commander of the Federal Republic. End Comment).

---

Abia State Crisis - Obasanjo Clips Governor's Wings

---

¶7. (U) Abia State Governor Orji Kalu has been a long-time resident of Obasanjo's dog house and it does not look like he will be paroled any time soon. On March 5, Kalu further kindled the President's ire by accusing the PDP leadership, including Board of Trustees Chair Tony Anenih, of plotting to assassinate him. Kalu further alleged receiving phone calls from the President's office threatening him for making such an allegation. Apparently unhappy with Kalu's antics, the presidency revoked the license of Kalu's Slok airline, citing alleged licensing infractions. In turn, Kalu attempted to dismiss his pro-Obasanjo Deputy Governor who had publicly contradicted Kalu by stating there was no plot to assassinate the Governor. After Abuja placed pressure on Kalu, he relented in chasing his deputy toward the exit ramp. However, Slok airlines remains grounded in Nigeria. (Comment: Kalu is a colorful politician who likes the swirl of controversy. However, his popularity has waned appreciably since 2002. This ally of VP Atiku and former lackey of ex-head of state Babangida is now vulnerable to political attack. Kalu's slump has little to do with Obasanjo's tactics. His governance has deteriorated. Meanwhile the success of APGA and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the southeast has made many of the Igbo, PDP governors and other elected officials less germane to the politics of their region.

---

Obasanjo Has Smooth Sailing Within The PDP In Southwest

---

¶8. (U) Unlike the Southeast where anti- and pro-Obasanjo forces within the PDP struggle, Obasanjo's opposition within the party is negligible in all five PDP controlled Southwestern states. Top loyalists like National Vice Chairman Bode George (recently sacked along with the board of the Nigerian Ports Authority over allegations of corruption) and prominent Oyo State politician Lamidi Adedibu appear to have successfully threshed opposition to Obasanjo in these states. In this region, opposition comes mainly from the AD, personified by Governor Tinubu of Lagos State.

---

South-South fights over Vice Presidential Ticket

---

¶9. (C) The big fights within the South-South states have been over the party's vice presidential ticket and over selection of the regional vice president in the party. With the presidential nomination likely to travel north, the VP selection will migrate South, perhaps to the South-South or Southeast. The Southwest is unlikely since Obasanjo from that area. His long tenure as president would militate against the region producing the next vice president. Pro-Atiku Governors Attah of Akwa Ibom, Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa, and Kalu of Abia are angling for the prize. Obasanjo apparently favors Rivers State Governor Peter Odili, chiefly because Odili checked his scruples at the door and delivered handsomely to Obasanjo in the 2003 election. Odili's fortune has suffered because of the recent violence in his state (reftels). Indicating his affinity for the governor, the usually gruff Obasanjo has given the velvet glove treatment to Odili by not directly upbraiding him for the commotion in Rivers or declaring a State of Emergency as Obasanjo did in Plateu State. Apparently, Obasanjo hopes Odili can rebound from this detrimental episode.

¶10. (U) Second, there was intense competition among the PDP governors in the zone over replacement for the murdered Animasoari Dikibo, the region's National Vice Chairman of the party. The zone is split between the selection of Godspower

Ake and Dr.Tarila Tebepah. Ake is Governor Odili's Special Advisor and nominee and Tarila is supported by four of the other five governors (Cross River Governor Duke has remained neutral). The four governors alleged that PDP national headquarters imposed Governor Odili's nominee on the zone to prepare the groundwork for Odili to get the vice presidential nomination in the 2007 presidential elections.

---
The Law of Unintended Consequences
---

¶11. (C) While attempting to render an iron grip on the party machinery in the South, Obasanjo and his lieutenants should be careful about who they squeeze out and what the rejected might do. Two of the GON's greatest headaches are people who once were allied with the Obasanjo's faction of the PDP. One is Alhaji Dokubo Asari, the central figure in the recent saga of the Niger Delta. The other is Ralph Uwazurike, leader of MASSOB in the Southeast.

¶12. (C) Banished from the PDP mainstream after losing favor in the Obasanjo camp, both men have taken actions seeking to make mainstream electoral politics irrelevant--Asari with his threat against oil production and Uwazureike by canvassing for Biafran independence. Most others who have been and will be dispossessed by the PDP will not go to such extremes, but many likely will seek solace in opposition parties.

---
COMMENT
---

¶13. (C) If not properly managed, the struggle for PDP party control could further aggravate schisms already hurting most of the party's southern chapters. In a bid to assert his authority, Obasanjo seemingly has empowered his loyalists to seize control of the various state machines in any manner they deem fit. Due to the strength of Obasanjo's position and VP Atiku's waning influence in the south, Obasanjo loyalists will likely win a majority of these tiffs. But the heavy-handedness is taking a toll on the party. The Obasanjo group may gain tighter control of the southern PDP, but at the price of creating greater division within the party and of adding to the roster of ex-members who join the opposition.

¶14. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BROWNE